

Child Abuse and Neglect



Reporting and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect

Overview

- What is child abuse and neglect?
- Who must report child abuse?
- How do I report?

The Prevalence of Child Abuse

- Alarming national statistics
 - More than 3 million cases of serious child abuse reported each year
 - It is estimated that for every case reported, there are three that are not.
 - An average of more than 4 children die each day as a result of child abuse
 - An estimated 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday
 - Lifetime cost of child abuse is \$210,000 per victim

Nebraska Child Abuse Law

Nebraska State Statute 28-707 / 28-710

A person commits child abuse if he or she knowingly, intentionally, or negligently causes or permits a minor child to be:

- a. Placed in a situation that endangers his/her life or physical or mental health
- b. Cruelly confined or cruelly punished
- c. Deprived of necessary
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Shelter
 - Care

Law continued...

- d. Left unattended in a motor vehicle if minor child is six years or younger
- e. Sexually abused
- f. Sexually exploited by allowing, encouraging, or forcing such person to solicit for or engage in
 - Prostitution
 - Debauchery
 - Public indecency
 - Obscene or pornographic photography, films, or depictions

Who Must Report in Nebraska?

- Physicians
- Medical Institutions
- Nurses
- School Employees
- Social Workers
- Anyone who observes or suspects a child is being abused or neglected is a mandatory reporter

What about Confidentiality?

- Privilege communication in Nebraska is waived in child abuse cases (§28-714)
- But there are exceptions!
 - Clergy must maintain the confidentiality of pastoral communications and are exempt if information is confessed during pastoral communications (§27-506)
 - Attorney-client privilege (27-503)
- HIPAA privacy protections permit reporting and disclosure of public health-related information on child maltreatment and child fatalities to professionals investigating in these cases.
- In school settings, FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) allows reporting any incidents of crime or information to protect the health and safety of a student.

Potential Consequences

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nebraska• Class III Misdemeanor<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Fine of \$500– 3 months imprisonment– Both | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Iowa• Simple Misdemeanor<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Fine of \$50 to \$500– Up to 30 days of jail time– Both |
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Statute of Limitations

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nebraska<ul style="list-style-type: none">– There is no statute of limitations for child sexual abuse. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Iowa<ul style="list-style-type: none">– 10 years after the person reaches 18 years of age for sexual abuse of a child– 10 years after commission of sexual abuse |
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Child Neglect*

- Accounts for 97% in Nebraska
- Evident in lack of:
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Shelter
 - Health care
 - Supervision
- Indicators
 - Absences
 - Begging/stealing food or money
 - Lacks medical/dental care
 - Dirty/severe body odor
 - “No one is at home.”

*Child Maltreatment 2010

Signs of Neglect in Child

- Frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations or glasses
- Consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Insufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider Neglect

- When parent or caregiver:
 - Appears indifferent to the child
 - Seems apathetic or depressed
 - Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
 - Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Physical Abuse

- 12% of cases in Nebraska
- Evidenced by unexplainable injury
 - Bruises
 - Broken bones
 - Burns
 - Cuts
 - Internal trauma
 - Head injuries
- Accident, discipline or abuse?
- Contributing factors
 - Poor parenting
 - Limited knowledge of child development
 - Stress: “Parent snaps”
 - Drugs/Alcohol
 - Mental Illness
 - Domestic Violence

Signs of Physical Abuse in Child

- Unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Frightened of parents and does not want to go home
- Shrinks at approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or other caregiver

Consider Physical Abuse

- When the parent or caregiver:
 - Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child’s injury
 - Describes the child as “evil” or in another negative way
 - Uses harsh physical discipline
 - Has a history of abuse as a child

Sexual Abuse

- Approx. 7% of cases
- Invisible abuse
- 80% victims deny or minimize
- Children lie about sexual abuse <1% of time
- May include
 - Touching
 - Fondling
 - Kissing
 - Sexual assault
 - Video taping sexual acts
- Indicators
 - Sexual knowledge and behaviors that are not age appropriate
 - Unexplained physical complaints in genital area
 - Significant change in routine/behavior
 - Secretive behavior, including use of internet and technology

Signs of Sexual Abuse in Child

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts an STI
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or other caregiver

Consider Sexual Abuse

- When parent or caregiver is:
 - Unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children
 - Secretive and isolated
 - Jealous or controlling with family members

Emotional Abuse

- Approx. .7% of all cases in Nebraska
- Most difficult to determine
- Combined with other maltreatment
- Difficult to substantiate and prosecute
- Effects similar to many mental and physical disorders

Signs of Emotional Abuse in Child

- Extremes in behavior such as overly compliant or demanding, extreme passivity or aggression
- Inappropriately adult or infantile
- Delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports lack of attachment to parent

Consider Emotional Abuse

- When parent of caregiver:
 - Constantly blames, belittles or berates child
 - Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child
 - Overtly rejects the child

How Do I Report?

Call...

- Law Enforcement (911)
- NE Dept of Health and Human Services
(CPS Hotline 1-800-652-1999)

Do's and Don'ts

- Do:
 - Explain in simple terms who you are
 - Attempt to determine child's developmental age
 - Know children believe they have to answer all questions, whether true or not
 - Be aware of what the child is going through
 - Let the child know she is safe with you
- Don't:
 - Pressure the child for information
 - Ask leading questions
 - Ask why the abuse occurred - infers blame
 - Make promises you cannot keep
 - Tell the child nothing bad will happen to you
 - Judge their behaviors

Things to Remember...

- Environment matters!
 - Safe
 - Friendly
 - Comfortable
 - Suitable for their size
 - Temperature
 - Away from possible suspect
 - Parents' demeanor
- Child's Demeanor
 - Tired
 - Hungry
 - Sleepy
 - Avoid early morning or evening interviews
 - Keep nap times in mind for younger children

Reactions to Reporting Abuse

- Concern for child
- Worry about relationship with child
- Frustrated with response
- Angry at the abuser
- Dissatisfaction with the investigation
- Depression

Reporter Needs

- Acknowledge stress inherent in reporting
- Seek out support
 - Supervisor
 - Colleagues
- Agency response
 - Child abuse and neglect policy
 - Staff person to provide support

Summary/Wrap-up

- Promote proficiency
- Facilitate collaboration
- Please complete evaluation
- Thank you!
